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MARIA MONK'S

SHOW-UP !!!

OR, THE

"Awful Disclosures,"

A HUMBUG.



Such Lies are not to be "*Bourne.*"

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VISIT TO MONTREAL, MARIA MONK'S "AWFUL DISCLOSURES ! !"

EXAMINATION OF THE HOTEL DIEU.

IN the course of a recent flying excursion through a portion of Lower Canada, bordering upon the St. Lawrence, it was both desirable and convenient to pass a few days in Montreal. The sojourn, in good weather, upon that rich and beautiful island of which the city bears the name, could scarce be otherwise than pleasant to the inquiring traveller, under any circumstances.— Doubly so was it rendered to us by the kind attentions and hospitalities of intelligent friends, who spared no pains in contributing to our comfort, and ministering to our curiosity.

To an American who has not "been abroad," and whose eye is accustomed only to the light and airy towns and cities of our own country, the narrow streets, and dark, massive built stone dwellings and store-houses, erected with an eye rather to use, convenience and comfort, than to the gratification of taste, or any correct principles of architecture, the city itself presents few external attractions. But its location is very beautiful. The island upon the south-eastern side of which the city is built, is formed by the St. Lawrence on the south, and by a branch of the Ottawa on the north. It is thirty miles in length, by ten and a half in breadth—constituting a very large seignory, and belonging to the Roman Catholic Seminary.

With the exception of a single mountain rising near the centre, to the height of from five to eight hundred feet, the island is perfectly level, and for the most part, in a high state of cultivation. The base and sides of the mountain are adorned by orchards, gardens, villas, and substantial country seats of the most opulent citizens, while it is crested with a noble array of primitive forest trees. The orchards are numerous and thrifty—producing an abundance of apples of the finest varieties, several of which were entirely new to me. All the usual garden fruits are produced in great abundance and perfection. In riding upon the side of the mountain, and at the left, as we were climbing the road that passes over it, among other fine country estates, my attention was directed to an ancient stone edifice, on the skirt of the ascent, surrounded by a wall, formerly distinguished by the appellation of the *Chateau des Seigneurs de Montreal*, but now generally called *La Maison des Petres*, or the Priest's Farm, as it belongs to the seminary, and is occupied as a summer retreat and place of re-

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creation during the warm weather. The grounds are ample, comprising spacious gardens and orchards, and all the members of the seminary, priests, tutors and pupils, resort thither once a week in summer.

From the summit of this mountain, the view is exceedingly picturesque and beautiful. The island itself, and the eastern shore of the St. Lawrence—pouring the mighty floods of the great lakes into the Northern Ocean—are thickly inhabited to the extent of many miles. The parish churches are numerous, and every where surrounded by the neat white cottages of the peasantry clustering around them. The rapids of Lachine in a perpetual foam above the sweet island of the nuns on the South; the charming island of St. Helen's, with its fortifications in front of the city, and the lofty mountains of Vermont and Chamby in the azure distance on the east and south-east; with a level plain, sprinkled with villages, farms, orchards, and gardens, all around from the St. Lawrence to the Ottawa, spreading beneath the feet of the beholder, combine to make up a landscape such as is rarely excelled, either for luxuriance, variety or beauty. But enough—perhaps already too much—of description. I will now proceed to graver matters.

Among the religious and other public institutions of Montreal demanding the attention of the inquisitive stranger, the monastic establishments of the Roman Catholics are not the least prominent. The history of *Monachism*, from the days of Paul, the Egyptian, who leads the van in the army of the monastic saints as the first Christian hermit—to say nothing of the Essenes and Therapeutes, the recluses, of Palestine and Egypt before the commencement of the Christian era—is rich in instruction and of absorbing interest. The first monastery was founded, according to the Romish legend—and the tale is a beautiful one—in the deserts of Upper Egypt, by the aforementioned Paul, in connexion with St. Anthony, in the year 303; or thereabout. Female monasteries, or convents of nuns, were instituted about a century afterward. Both have been at times eminently useful, and both at other times eminently corrupt. They have served as places of refuge, from persecution, of retirement and repose from the cares of the world, of religious study and meditation, and as schools of learning, benevolence and virtue.—They have also at times degenerated into dens of debauchery and crime. Still, when we consider that it was to them, for many centuries, that the world was indebted for all it knew of letters and religion, and that they were the abodes of such meek and holy spirits as Bede and Thomas-a-Kempis, it is not to be taken for granted by every opponent of the Roman See, that a monastery must necessarily be the vestibule of hell, and every recluse worthy only of such an abode.

With such views and impressions, I was of course glad of

an opportunity of looking at an establishment of this description with my own eyes ; and having from my youth heard much of the Christian monasticism of Lower Canada, it may well be conjectured that the excitement recently enkindled in the United States against the priests and nuns of Montreal, by the startling publications of Maria Monk, in connexion with the writings of several Protestant controversialists of acknowledged talents and piety, had not abated the desire, which under any circumstances, I should have felt to visit their communities.—Of the verity or falsehood of the truly “ Awful Disclosures” of Maria Monk, I had formed no very definite opinion previous to entering the province. Indeed, I had not read the book in any other manner than by an occasional and very cursory glance at a few of its pages. Still I had read much *from* and *of* it, and heard much more ; and I am constrained in candor to confess that, although at times a partial believer, and at others a sceptic as to the truth of her fearful revelations of hypocrisy, lust, and blood, I was rather a believer than otherwise, during the earlier part of my Canadian visit.

True the tale was most revolting, and it was not a little difficult to bring the mind to believe it possible, that even the most hardened of our species could be guilty, from year to year, if the frightful abominations charged by Miss Monk upon the priests and nuns of Montreal—much less that the professed ministers of the Christian religion,—of any faith,—however widely they might have strayed from the truth, or however deeply been plunged in error, or however much involved in the gross and mystical fanaticism of the “scarlet lady”—could have been guilty of the horrible successions of crimes imputed to them. Still more difficult was it to suppose it possible that woman, gentle woman—who had sought in solitude a protection against the corruptions and temptations of the world—assuming a name indicative of purity as well as its garb—could resign themselves by whole communities, as the ready and willing instruments of lust and murder. But on the other hand, my prejudices against the Catholic faith were strong. Its monstrous corruptions in the old world were notorious. The work of Maria Monk I knew to have been written by one of our most estimable citizens—a gentleman of character and approved christian piety—who had taken every pains, as he supposed, to record the exact truth. I knew from his own lips, that he was a religious believer of all that he had thus written. I knew that other intelligent and pious gentlemen, had, by repeated examinations, endeavored to detect the girl’s imposture, if impostor she was, without success. I knew that these men, and multitudes of others, were firm believers in the truth of her revelations. I had heard that emissaries from the priests were prowling about New-York, and that several attempts had been made to spirit

the poor girl away, and bring her once more forcibly within their power at Montreal. I had heard of her repeated offers to go to Montreal and establish the truth of her disclosures by examinations—which propositions had been refused. I had been taught to regard the mysterious silence of the accused as ominous of evil, and had been assured by numerous publications, that circumstances numerous and strong had transpired, going to show that extensive alterations within the nunnery, had been made, for the purpose of preventing detection, should an examination ever take place. A variety of incidents, moreover had been communicated to me as facts, while on the way to Montreal, which had materially strengthened the impression upon my mind, arising from this formidable array of circumstances, until I had almost arrived at the belief, that, after all, there might be more of truth in the tale than I had been willing at first to admit.

I soon ascertained, that such was not the opinion of the citizens of Montreal. I did not indeed expect to find the people generally, or even the half of them, believers in the entire relations of the fair fugitive. But having been assured, from time to time, by the publishing friends of the interesting victim, that her work was causing some excitement in that capital, and that the army of believers would be vastly greater but for the terror in which the protestants were held by the Romanists, and the danger they would incur by the expression of any opinion unfavorable to them, I did expect to meet now and then with some one courageous believer, with a multitude of others, stealing timidly along, looking unutterable things, and shivering and shuddering at every apparition of cowl and cassock as though expecting every moment to be seized and pulled to peices. But it was not so. Such a city of skeptics, in all that pertained to the disclosures of the wronged fair one, was never before seen. Nay, more, so perfectly absurd and ridiculous did the people with one accord consider the whole affair, that they seemed to look upon the intelligent denizens of the United States, as labouring under a widely extended monomania! There was but one voice upon the subject—protestants and catholics—those of every and all denominations, born and bred upon the spot—men of intelligence and unquestionable piety—those who had passed the open gates of the Hotel Dieu, or looked from their casements over its frowning walls every day of their lives—were all stubborn unbelievers;—and I may add in this place, instead of elsewhere, that I was able to hear of but two believers in the “Awful Disclosures” in Montreal, one of whom, as will be seen in the sequel, was evidently afraid to visit the nunnery, lest he should be forced by actual demonstration to change his opinion.

But the fact that the whole town and province disbelieved

the narrative of Miss Monk, was no good reason why I should not take a survey of the establishment, in which the reported enormities were occurring, more especially as these were at least twice the number on the Yankee side of the line, (that is to be) who are most devout believers of the whole. And as for any supposed advantages derived by the former from their near location and acquaintanceship with the accused, did not the increase of numbers on the other side, bring the balance to a equapoise? Perhaps not: but I was determined in any event to visit the Catholic establishments generally, and look as closely into the fearful Hotel Dieu as the guardians of its portals would allow me to come.

The friends accompanying us were A. Frothingham, Esq. President of the Bank of Montreal, and Duncan Fisher, Esq. to whose kind attentions we were greatly indebted. Our first visit was to the *Hospital General des Sœurs Grises*, a convent of the Grey Sisters—an institution founded in 1750, by Madame de Youville, as a refuge for the infirm poor, invalids, and the destitute aged. It occupies a space of 678 feet along the little river St. Pierre, by nearly the same depth, containing a convent for the residence of the nuns, a depot, ample wards for both sexes, all the requisite offices for such an extensive establishment, and a detached building, for persons laboring under diseases of the mind. This convent is governed by a superior and thirty-four sisters. We passed through the wards, which were spacious, and well aired and kept. Both departments were filled with the lame, the halt and the blind, and every species of decrepitude, and among the subjects were many who were very old. One of these, with whom we conversed, had not only been many years an inmate, but was cheerful at the advanced age of one hundred and four years—having been born in the same year with Washington. The eyes of the old centenerian brightened at the recollection, as though it was no mean honor even to have drawn his first breath in the same year with such a man. It was a gratifying spectacle to observe the kindness and attention received by these aged and infirm fellow-beings whom misfortune had thrown upon the benevolence of this community, and however much we may deplore the errors of their religious faith, we could not but admire their zeal in alleviating the distresses of their fellow-men.

From these apartments we were next led into the rooms occupied as an orphan asylum, or foundling hospital, I am not certain which—perhaps both. In the first division we found some twenty or thirty boys of ten years and under, and a like number of girls in the second. They were all cheerful, but much more vivacity was exhibited in the second—characteristic alike of Females and the French. In each of the apartments visited, articles of fancy needle-work were produced, sales of which are made for the benefit of the institution.

We entered the Grey Nunnery at 11 o'clock—just as the sisters had gone to dinner. The nuns, and the priests at the seminary, dine at the same hour. They take a light breakfast at half past 4, consisting of a piece of bread and a cup of tea; dine at 11, and are summoned to the chapel for their mid-day devotions at 12. With the ringing of the bell, we, by request, were conducted to the chapel; where the nuns having entered first, were already upon their knees in a column of two deep in the centre aisle. They told their beads, and repeated their prayers in chorus, and having concluded, rose at a signal from the superior in the gallery, wheeled round to the right and left, and returned—scarce raising their eyes from the polished floor. They were generally middle-aged or young women.

The habit of the grey sisters consists of a dress of drab bombazine, made in the fashion of our Quaker friends, only that the sleeves are long and ample, *a la Bishop*, terminated with broad cuffs of the same material. They wear a black Italian crape cap, with a plain border of crape, lined with black silk. This cap too, is after the Quaker fashion. While in the nunnery I observed that the skirt is always turned up, and fastened under the waist behind with a hook and eye. We saw them afterward going in procession to the cathedral, and then the skirts, I believe, were not turned up—but am not quite certain.

The chapel is a very neat apartment, well supplied with pictures, none of which are good, and for the most part very bad. The altar was richly gilded, and adorned with vases of various freshly gathered flowers. Among the relics displayed, was a fragment cut from the veil of the sacred statue of the Virgin, if we do not mis-recollect—of very great antiquity. It is carefully framed within glass, together with the certificates of authenticity.

From the Grey Nunnery we drove to the terrible theatre of the "Awful Disclosures"—the Hotel Dieu itself—the portals of which, from the publications of Maria Monk and her collaborators in this city, we might very well have expected to find guarded by "gorgons, hydras and chimeras dire." But it was not so. The broad and ample gate-way into the yard was wide open, as our companions assured us it always had been during the day-time, these thirty years—and how much longer they could not tell. A very civil-spoken man met us at the door and conducted us into the hospital. This now so celebrated institution fronts upon St. Paul's street on the east, extending along that street 324 English feet, by 468 feet in depth on St. Joseph's street, from which latter we entered. The whole buildings belonging to, and connected with the establishment, include the hospital, the convent or cloister, a chapel, kitchen, bake-house, stables and cemetery. A large garden is likewise attached. It was founded in 1664, by the Duchess of Bouil-

lon—as a hospital for the reception of the sick and diseased poor of both sexes, and without regard to religious creeds, and is conducted by a superior and thirty-six nuns. Its funds are chiefly derived from some landed estate belonging to it, but the income is scarcely sufficient, and contributions from other sources, together with their own industry, help to augment their means of supply.

Notwithstanding the favorable appearance of all that we saw, and the universal skepticism before spoken of existing among the people, I cannot deny the fact that the publications already referred to, had in some degree prejudiced our minds against the inmates, and rendered us suspicious of almost every thing we were to see. On entering the first ward, Mr. F. enquired of the nurse in attendance for Miss Beckwith, one of the sisterhood who speaks English, and with whom he was acquainted. After a few moments she came, and we were introduced to her. She received us with great kindness. Her whole appearance is extremely agreeable. She conducted us to the chapel, through both wards of the hospital, and through the apothecary's apartment. Every variety of disease finds alleviation here—without any questions being asked as to sect, or country. If laboring under a disease which is not contagious the patient is received on application, and when restored, is dismissed without any compensation, or any questions being asked. The beds and rooms were in perfect order, each bearing the name of a Catholic saint—a male, if in the men's apartment, and a female in that of the women. The sick lay quietly in their respective beds, neatly curtained—looking as if the hand of friendship and female sympathy had smoothed and arranged them. All was still and serene.

Can these walls, thought I, witness so much self-denial and patience, so much toil and watching, without expectation of fee or reward on earth, and yet the abode of vice and profligacy which it is a shame even to name? Is it possible for beings depraved as these have been reported to be, to find that pleasure in doing good, which sustains them amidst all their privations? Is it probable—is it at all reconcilable—that persons living in habits of criminal sensuality, can be found so disciplined in spirit as to attend upon cases of disease most revolting, and for that class of society too which exhibits disease in its most revolting features, because its subjects are destitute of refined feelings, and that delicacy which conceals as much as possible what has a tendency to disgust or offend. And this course of conduct is not an occasional gush of feeling exhibited before the world for effect, but is undertaken as a permanent employment, from which sickness or death only can release them. As these thoughts passed through my mind, Mr. F. mentioned Miss Monk's book to Miss Beckwith, and asked her if she knew the lady who had written it.

She replied that the reputed lady never had been there as a nun, though it was possible she might have been in the hospital, as the names of patients were never inquired. She said she had not read the book, though she had heard of many things contained in it. She said she had herself taken the veil ten years since, and during that time had never heard of Maria Monk. She then observed that within the last few months strangers visiting the hospital had often enquired if there was a nun with them named Jane Ray. She told them she never had heard of one by that name since she had been there, but the question being so often put, at length excited some curiosity, and induced her to ask the superior, who told her she had never been there, and they then bethought themselves of making an enquiry of Mrs. M'Donell, who kept the Magdalen Asylum. Mrs. M'D. immediately replied that Jane Ray was then in her establishment, and at the same time mentioned Maria Monk as having been there also.

It was then for the first time, and from Mrs. McDonell, if I understood Miss Beckwith correctly, that they received intelligence of the "Awful Disclosures." In continuation, she remarked, that she had never read the book herself; but from what she had heard of its contents, she should suppose that no one could write such details, unless very depraved; and a pure-minded person could not have imagined them. When it was told her that the book was believed by many in the states, she said "the Protestants hate the Catholics so much, that they are willing to believe every thing said against them. "But," she added, "how can they believe such statements, as these disclosures, when Mr. Perkins has examined the cloister,—for he is a very decided Protestant, and in no wise favorable to our religion." Still, on asking her if we could be permitted to extend our observations to other apartments, she said no. This nunnery was a cloister; and neither priest nor layman, man or woman, was permitted to enter further, unless by an express order from the Bishop. Thus in part was the New-York story confirmed, that no examination of the nunnery itself—its heavy iron doors and dark passages—its rooms of prostitution and vaults of gloom—would be allowed.

In closing this account of our first visit, however, I must be permitted *en passant* to note the fine condition and beautiful order of the apothecary's apartment. It is extensive and arranged in a manner that would gladden the sight of the New York college of Pharmacy. The jars and gallipots are all of the ancient translucent drak-blue and white china, of the same size and pattern, rendering the shelves perfectly uniform. Two of the nuns are in constant attendance on the establishment, manufacturing and preparing medicine. They also cup and bleed. The physician in attendance merely prescribes, and they execute his orders. Two of the nuns are also in

constant attendance upon each ward of the hospital, night and day ; they take their turns, and in a community of only thirty-six, the occasion does not seldom come round.

Thus ended our first visit to the Hotel Dieu—having seen nothing of “ Masks, hatchets, racks, and vipers,” nor experienced any thing to remind us of the *sanctum officium*, of Pope Innocent III., or of Torquemada. Still we had been permitted to proceed no farther than the hospitals—all beyond was secret, silent and mysterious. We had heard no groans ; but some of the believers in Maria Monk may suppose that half a dozen infants might have been gently smothered, during our visit, and some pretty rebellious nun trodden to death between two feather-beds, for all that. Nevertheless, we took our departure, and proceeded next to the Cathedral, standing a few rods farther to the north, on the left of St. Joseph street, fronting upon Notre Dame-street, and directly upon a diagonal line from the Hotel Dieu to the Seminary of the Priests—the Cathedral well nigh filling the intermediate block between them. The Cathedral is a new edifice, and is in some respects the most splendid temple in the *new* world, and as said a late foreign traveller, only surpassed by the *old* in interior grandeur. Its length is 225 feet, and its breadth 234. It was commenced in 1824, finished in 1829, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The height of its walls is 112 feet. The architecture is of the rich Gothic of the 13th century. It has six massive towers, between which is a promenade along the roof 25 feet wide, elevated 112 feet. There are seven altars, and the east window behind the grand altar is 70 feet high, by 33 feet broad. The other windows are 36 feet by 10. It is surrounded by a fine terrace, the chime of bells, the clocks, altars, &c, are comparatively rich. But as a whole, the interior is not equal to the exterior, nor by any means equal in point of taste, splendor of decoration, and beauty of its paintings to the Cathedral of Baltimore. This structure is larger, however, than that of Baltimore, being sufficiently capacious to accommodate 12,000 persons.

My reasons for the particularity of this description in this place, will appear in the sequel. I attended high mass in this noble edifice on two Sabbath mornings, before the commencement of worship in the protestant churches. On both occasions the Cathedral was filled by as attentive and well ordered a congregation as I have ever seen in New-York. The organ is too small for the place ; but aided by other instruments, and a full choir around the great altar, the music was as deep, rich and solemn as the big “ bass of the ocean.”

The seminary of St. Sulpice, situated upon the corner of Francois-Xavier and Notre Dame streets, opening upon the latter, and directly west of the cathedral, was next visited. This is the general residence of the priests of Montreal—

whose practice it is, according to Maria Monk, to be continually visiting the Hotel Dieu, for purposes of seduction and murder, by a subterranean passage, which, if it exists, must lead directly under the stupendous pile of the cathedral, just described. This seminary extends 342 feet upon Notre Dame-street, and 449 on Francois-Xavier street. It was founded in 1657, by the Abbe Quetus, who was sent out by the seminary of St. Sulpice, in Paris. The original object of the institution was the education of youth, through all departments, including the higher branches of philosophy and the mathematics. It has an able superior, and professors of eminence in the different sciences, who are said to pursue a judicious plan of general instruction. In order to extend its usefulness, a new college has been erected by the seminary in the Recollet suburbs—a large and handsome structure.

I was introduced at the seminary, to many of the clergy, and some of the dignitaries of the church—among whom were the lord Bishop M'Donald, of Upper Canada, and the bishop of Red River, both being on a visit to the lower province. I was also introduced to Father Richards, who figures in the "Awful Disclosures" as one of the most humane of the priests at the murder of the nun St. Francis. Father Richards is a short fat personage, has a mild blue eye, and is exceedingly fair spoken. He was once a methodist minister in Virginia; but conceiving the project of converting the catholic clergy of Montreal to the true faith, he proceeded thither for that purpose. But in the end he was as badly off as the count O'Reilly, who went to take Algiers—Algiers took him! Bishop M'D. is a Scotch gentleman of the old School—affable, intelligent, and, for a catholic, not intolerant. He allows his people to read the Bible, and gives away all that he can obtain for that object.

The subject of Maria Monk's "awful disclosures" having been introduced at the Seminary, those of the Clergy who spoke English, entered freely upon it, without hesitation, and with an air of conscious innocence. Having intimated that there was nothing of, in, or about, the Hotel Dieu, respecting which they desired concealment, the idea first seriously occurred to me of putting their sincerity, and that of the nuns, to the test, by applying for permission to visit the cloisters, and make a thorough scrutiny. They repeated what had been said to us by the nuns, that no person could be permitted to enter the cloisters without an order from the Bishop of Montreal, who was then absent from the city. But Bishop M'Donald and Father Richards entered at once into my views, and promised their good offices in obtaining the necessary order, as soon as the Bishop should return. I assured them that my only desire was to arrive at the truth, and that if I entered upon the duty, I should not be satisfied without making thorough work of it. And thus I left them.

The more I reflected upon the subject, the more evident did it seem, that the cause of truth and justice required at my hands an investigation of this kind, placed there as I was, without any previous design of making such a visit, and wholly uncommitted, and unconnected with any of the parties to the controversy. If the priests and the nuns were actually guilty of the fearful practices imputed to them, the truth should be known. If, on the contrary, the horrible stories respecting them were not true, the slander, whether originating in the malice of a wicked woman, or the distempered imagination of one who added insanity to her frailty, should be arrested. In any event, the Catholics were as much entitled to justice, as any other sect of Christians; and I could not but hope and believe, that in the event of being allowed to make a thorough investigation of the premises, I could not only arrive at a satisfactory conclusion myself, but should be able to aid in giving the public mind in my own country a proper direction. Should it in the end appear that Maria Monk had told the truth, no punishment ever invented by the *Holy Inquisition* would be too severe for such lustful, bloody, and hypocritical villainy. But, on the other hand, should it be apparent that they were the victims of calumny, it was high time that the crusade should be at an end—since I could perceive nothing more commendable in Protestant, than in Catholic persecution. Entertaining and pondering these views, I sought and obtained an interview with the Rev. Mr. PERKINS, of the American Presbyterian church—the able, zealous, and pious successor of the lamented CHRISTMAS in that city—and a son of the late Hon. Enoch Perkins, of Hartford.—Mr. P. warmly approved of my design. He had himself visited the cloister, as one of a committee, in July, and was smarting under the cruel attacks of the friends of Maria Monk in this city. He was therefore exceedingly anxious that I should have testimony of my own senses, to the correctness of the conclusions at which he had arrived, or discover to him his error, if he was wrong. He did not hesitate to express to me his perfect conviction, however, that an examination would bring me to the unshaken conclusion, that, however bad the Catholics may be in other respects, or in other countries, they are entirely innocent in this matter. There was no mistake in his opinion upon the subject. He had resided there several years—was well acquainted with the general character of the priests and the people—as also by common fame with the character of Maria Monk—and he did not hesitate to pronounce her disclosures the most entire and atrocious collection of lies that could be conceived. Thus believing—nay, thus knowing—he had endeavoured as strongly as he could by letters to the writer of Maria's book, to prevent its

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publication. He had admonished him of the falsity of her tales and implored him to desist.

Other gentlemen, of different churches, were also consulted. Their opinions were the same, both as it respected the character of the disclosures, and the propriety of my proposed examination. The result was, that I resolved on making the attempt; and returning to Montreal from Quebec on Saturday morning the 23d ultimo, I was informed that an order for the admission of Frothingham, Mrs. Stone, and myself into the cloister, had been issued by the bishop on the preceding day. A gentleman from Richmond, (Va.) a Mr. Shepard, with his lady, having understood our design, obtained an order through a friend, on that morning, to be permitted to accompany us in the visitation.

The editors of the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Ami du Peuple* in calling for the present narrative, have both taken occasion to introduce the name of the Rev. Mr. Clary, a Congregational clergyman recently from this State, and now the pastor of a congregation in that city. Regretting as I do, that the name of that gentleman should be brought before the public, the duty is nevertheless devolved upon me of making an explanation, in justice to both of us and to all. On the morning of the day appointed for the exploration of the nunnery, Mr. Clary favoured me with a call, and gave me the first information I had received, that his name had been associated with mine, in the order for opening the cloisters of the Hotel Dieu for our inspection. It is not necessary, were it even proper, to give a detail of all the conversation that passed between us. An abstract will be all-sufficient for the purpose in hand. Mr. C. informed me frankly that his position was peculiar, and he seemed apprehensive that were he to accept the invitation, it might place him in an unpleasant situation. He said his name had already appeared in some of the New-York publications in connexion with the controversy on this subject—a letter of his having been published, in which he had declared that admittance into the cloisters had been denied him; and he evidently apprehended that the present spontaneous offer had been made to entrap him. He said that that letter was strictly true, as he had once been promised admission into the Nunnery, but when he subsequently applied for permission to search the building in company with Maria Monk, he had been refused. He was particularly desirous to know whether it was my intention to take merely a cursory and superficial examination of the premises, or to make thorough work of it. In reply I assured him repeatedly, that my determination was inflexible, to make as thorough an investigation as could be desired—that the

priests had given me to understand that every facility for that end should be granted, and that I was resolved to scrutinize the whole structure, in all its ramifications, from garret to cellar—to lift every trap door—to inspect every secret vault—unbar every door—search every cellar—and thread every subterranean passage. Mr. Clary did not admit that he was a *believer* in Miss Monk's book, but he was evidently not a *disbeliever*. Among the objections he started was the probability that were we to make the visit, we should be called upon to write upon the subject. To which I replied that I could perceive no objection to that; should the examination be full, and free, and fair, we could say so. And, on the other hand, should we leave the institution unsatisfied, there need be no hesitation in proclaiming that fact likewise. But he intimated his apprehensions that we should be deceived by the wiles of those with whom we were to have to do, and repeated his reluctance to place himself in such a position that would compel him to write any thing upon the subject. We parted before he had determined what course to pursue, with an understanding that I should call upon him in the course of the morning, and apprise him of the hour of entering upon the investigation. This engagement was fulfilled, but Mr. C. was undetermined whether to go or not. Being very anxious that he should make one of the party, I urged him to accompany us—but was obliged to leave him again in a state of uncertainty. At the hour appointed he called at my hotel, and stated that on the whole he thought it best to decline the invitation. I hinted to him the unpleasant dilemma in which he might be involved by the refusal. But to no purpose. He retired, and I saw him no more.

The hour appointed for commencing our researches, was two o'clock, and the residue of the morning was devoted to the study of the latest edition of the "Awful Disclosures," which is accompanied by the drawings of the premises as laid down in the tablets of Maria Monk's memory, and for a copy of which I was indebted to the politeness of Mr. Clary. A few passages for special reference were marked in pencil, and the leaves turned down at others. But my determination was to make the examination book in hand, and refer to its pages as occasion might require. Such was the course pursued.

Punctual to the appointment, we arrived at five minutes after two, and were received in the 'apothecary' by the assistant superior Miss Weeks, an American lady, and two other sisters, who had been designated to attend us. I inquired for Miss Beckwith, also from the United States, whose parents reside in the neighborhood of Batavia; she was immediately sent for, and soon made her appearance.

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Our meeting was like that of old friends. She is certainly one of the most prepossessing ladies with whom I have ever met. Her countenance is full of intelligence, and expressive of great tenderness and sympathy, and the tones of her voice harmonise with these qualities. I remarked to them that I presumed from what had been dropped at our former visit, they were fully apprised of the object of our call—being if possible, to test the truth or falsehood of Maria Monk's publications in New-York. I informed them that I should be satisfied with nothing short of a minute examination of any and every part of the institution. I said to them, frankly, that I had been admonished of their arts of deception, and had been told that they would mislead me at every turn, and throw dust in my eyes at their own pleasure; and that consequently I trusted they would be neither displeased nor surprised if the scrutiny I was about to institute should seem over-nice and particular. They replied that it was their desire to have the investigation satisfactory to me, and that the keys and their assistance were at my disposal. The Lady Superior, they informed me, was confined to her apartment by indisposition—otherwise it would have been her pleasure to receive us in person. She would, however, be happy to receive us in her own apartment.

We then commenced our travels and researches—being soon joined by several additional members of the sisterhood who accompanied us through our examination. Others we met in their respective apartments, busied in their regular occupations. Having passed through the hospitals as before, we entered the cloisters, and proceeded through the various apartments of the first story. Every door, of every room, closet and pantry, was readily opened at my request, and there was not an apartment, in either story, which I did not examine with the closest scrutiny, to note whether there had or had not been any alterations—any removal of partitions, closing of doors, new painting, or suspicious whitewashing, or any such things—not forgetting one truth, inserted by the amanuensis of Maria, in the sequel of her latest edition, that "*whatever alterations may be attempted, there are changes which no mason or carpenter can make and effectually conceal.*" But in this story there had been no changes of any kind. The work and the fixtures were all, evidently, time worn and ancient.

There were, however, trap-doors in several of the apartments—several more than are specified in the drawings of Maria Monk. Every one of these trap-doors I opened myself, and into every one of the vaults I descended, sometimes alone, but more frequently accompanied by Messrs. Frothingham and Shepard. These vaults were usually store-rooms for the accommodation of the particular apartments immedi-

ately above. Every wall was carefully examined, both as to its appearance, the texture of its mortar, &c. &c. After these examinations were ended, the sisters took us into the yards, and conducted us into the cellars and vaulted rooms. The same scrutiny was every where made, and the texture of the mortar tried by an iron-pointed cane. Every door and passage way was opened and examined, with the like results.

We now re-entered the convent and ascended to the next story, examining every department with the most deliberate and eagle-eyed attention. We visited the cells of the nuns, and examined their furniture. The unsophisticated reader may perhaps think these cells are very dark and gloomy places, with stone floors, and locks, and bars, and grates. No such thing. They are neat little apartments, containing a single bed with green curtains and counterpane, two old-fashioned high backed chairs, a little desk with a small case for books, and within which is also a crucifix. The books so far as we looked at them, were such as good Protestants might become still better by reading. Having ascended to the attick, we had now examined every part except one of the long attick rooms, into which I looked carefully through a glass window at the head of the stairway—Miss Weeks having forgotten to bring the key to the door. The room was used for drying clothes, for which purpose, as it was well lighted I saw the necessary fixtures, and I did not think it necessary to send the lady down all the stairs for the key.

Soon after we commenced our investigations, we were presented to the Lady Superior, at the door of her apartment, into which we were admitted. She was suffering from an attack of rheumatism. She is a lady of dignity and refinement of manners—somewhat advanced in years. She received us with the utmost urbanity, nay, with cordiality; and regretted not being able to accompany us through the institution. Indeed the nuns have all the ease, simplicity, dignity, and grace which distinguish the high bred and truly genteel. I have rarely seen so many ladies together, possessing in so great a degree, the charm of manner. They were all affability and kindness. Cheerfulness was universal, and very unlike the notions commonly entertained of the gloom of the cloister. Their faces were too often wreathed in smiles to allow us to suppose that they were soon to assist in smothering their own children, or that those sweet spirits were soon to be trodden out of their bodies by the rough-shod priests of the seminary. The costume of the black nuns is different from what I had supposed. The dress is of black bombazine, with ample skirt, and bishop sleeves; the neck dress consists of a large square white linen collar, reaching up to the chin;

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to this is attached a strap passing across the top of the head to which the bandeau is fastened. This is a white linen band bound round the forehead, and reaching down to the eyebrows, so as to conceal the hair entirely. To this the black veil is attached, which is made of a large double square of black Italian crape, and reaches from the top of the bandeau half way down the skirt behind. The face is not at all covered by the veil, nor the front of the person. The skirts are turned up like those of the grey nuns. The *tout ensemble* is dignified, becoming, and rather graceful.

In the recreation room we were introduced to the novices, some four or five. The conversation was gay and cheerful, and so pleasant was their laughter at some of our remarks, that I asked them in badinage, what right they had to laugh—that in such a place their business must be to look grave and gloomy, and never smile! The greater number of nuns are advanced in life, and some of them are very aged. In the infirmary of the cloister we were introduced to quite an aged member of the community. Although an invalid for many years, she was cheerful and agreeable—receiving us with marks of kind consideration. Indeed I have never witnessed in any community or family more unaffected cheerfulness and good humor, nor more satisfactory evidence of entire confidence, esteem and harmony among each other.

Among the instances of innocent sportiveness which occurred, proving that the merry mischief of woman did not always leave her on taking the veil, was the following: I had been diligently looking for the “purgatory,” as laid down in Maria Monk’s book. The sisters told me I must find it. At length we came to a small apartment, less ancient than the other wood-work, built out from the wall, in which the hired women, seamstresses, spinners, &c., were at work. The door was locked, and there was no window, except a square hole cut through the partition deals, high up from the floor. “Ah,” I exclaimed, “Miss Weeks what have you here?” “Nothing”—said she—“nothing but a—poor nun doing penance!” “That spinning wheel,” I remarked, “would be penance enough for many young ladies in our country. But give us the keys.” “No,” she said—“you must look for yourself.” Taking a chair, I thereupon climbed up to the dark hole, and thrusting my head through, discovered that the mysterious cell was a store room for loaf sugar hanging around the walls, and a few barrels of other family supplies. And this was all the “purgatory” discovered by us.

And here, perhaps, I may as well remark as elsewhere, that in the course of our inspection I took frequent occasion to refer to the drawings and the pages of the “awful disclosures,” and I am constrained to say, that I was utterly

unable, throughout, to discern any mark, or sign, or trace of resemblance to anything she has laid down or described, other than the external localities, which nobody could well mistake. But so far as regards the whole interior, neither I nor my companions could discover from the drawings, the least evidence that the author had ever been within the walls of the cloister. By way of excusing the inaccuracies, or rather the total and all but universal dissimilarity of the map—the friends of Maria first assert that great changes have been made in the building; and if that is not sufficient, they imploringly exclaim—"Oh what can a poor girl do! We do not pretend to perfect accuracy—but she has given drawings from recollection, the best that were in her power." To the first excuse it may be replied, without fear of contradiction from any one but Maria herself, that there have been no changes. To the second it may be well said that the girl must be an incorrigible blockhead not to be able to remember somewhat of the interior of a house she pretends to have been so long a resident, and in some apartments of which she maintains that such terrible scenes have been enacted. But she does not; and it is a little remarkable that the only internal resemblance to the diagrams she has given, are said to be found in the recent Catholic Magdalen asylum of Mr. McDonell, which was dissolved about a week before our visit, and in which the celebrated Jane Ray remained until the last.

Having ascended again to the apothecary, Miss Weeks informed us that the task was over. I told her that there was another cellar under the wing in which we then were, which I had not explored. She remarked that as that did not properly belong to the convent, my permission did not extend to it. For a moment my suspicions were awakened. I replied that I must explore that cellar, and the trapdoor which I had just discovered near where we were, or my work was not done. Miss Beckwith was thereupon despatched to the superior for permission, which was immediately and readily granted. The task of exploration was forthwith undertaken and executed. It was most thoroughly done, and we were now about to take leave, when I discovered another cellar door, leading from the outside directly into that part of the building from beneath which, according to the plan of the book, the secret subterranean passages lead to the seminary one way, and the Congregational (School) Nunnery the other. I asked if I might examine that cellar? Certainly, they said; but as it is merely the kitchen cellar, we did not suppose you cared about looking into it. An Irish laborer near by was then directed to go into the kitchen for the keys, and Mr. Frothingham and myself were inducted by Pat into the receptacle of potatoes and turnips—for such it proved to

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"a great, gloomy iron door!" To be sure, it was in quite a different place from that designated by her. But it was locked and would not yield to my attempts upon it. Perhaps, thought I, we shall find the range of prison cells here—poor nuns with gags, and a charnel house of skeletons. I told Pat he must open that door. Well, he said, he must do it upon the other side—and away he went. In a moment more, the massive iron turned upon its ponderous hinges, and lo! we were—let into the day light on the other side, in a store room which we had examined before!—There was also a kitchen well in this cellar—small, and furnished with an old iron pump, and other rather dilapidated fixtures.—Not supposing that the Nuns would throw their murdered sisters and children into the spring from which they drew their water for their tea and cooking, I did not descend.—The walls, however, as before, were most thoroughly examined, into every nook and corner—and I was compelled now to conclude my subterranean researches, without being able to stroll *under* the deep foundations of the cathedral, and startle the priests of the seminary by coming up through one of their own trap doors!

I have already remarked, that the cellars in general, were used for store rooms. In one of them into which I descended through a trap door, I found a number of large stone jugs. Recollecting that Maria had spoken of some vessels, which from her description, must have been carboys of sulphuric acid, used, as she intimates, with lime, to destroy the remains of the murdered victims, I examined these jugs. From the odour of the corks, and the scent of the jugs themselves, I presumed their contents had been syrups, essences, and medicinal decoctions for the sick and the apothecary. The only lime that I discovered, was in a hot bed the gardener had been making, (for radishes,) I believe.

Thus ended this examination, in which we were most actively engaged for about three hours. The result is the most thorough conviction that Maria Monk is an arrant impostor—that she never was a nun, and was never within the walls of the cloister of the Hotel Dieu--and consequently that her disclosures are wholly and unequivocally, from beginning to end, untrue--either the vagaries of a disordered brain, or a series of calumnies unequalled in the depravity of their invention, and unsurpassed in their enormity. There are those, I am well aware, who will not adopt this conclusion, though one should arise from the dead and attest it--even though "Noah, Daniel, and Job" were to speak from the slumber of ages and confirm it.

These will ask why, if the "disclosures" were not true, the nunnery was not at once thrown open to the public--why its doors, were so long closed, and why did silence as to

those charges so long reign within its walls? There are several reasons: in the first place, the tales were so improbable of themselves, and the character of Maria Monk herself so utterly worthless and detestable, that it was not deemed necessary to pay the least regard to them. They did not suppose in Montreal, either within or without the convent, that there could be found in the United States, or elsewhere, persons so weak and so credulous as to lend the least credence to them. But the best answer is found in the sensible remarks of the nuns themselves. "You see," said Miss Weeks, "how impossible it would be for us to conduct the establishment, if visitors were usually admitted into the cloister for no other object than the gratification of their own idle curiosity--more especially such crowds of visitors as we should have had after the publication of the work." Proceeding with her conversation, she added--"We are constantly employed, and each has her portion of occupation. If our labours are interrupted, our sick must suffer, and the whole business of the establishment come to an end." And besides all this, a man's house is his castle, and what man or woman among us--or which of our hospitals, or public institutions, would consent to suspend their labors, and relinquish all their comforts, to gratify successive swarms of Canadians, or others, whose curiosity might be stimulated by the scandalous tales of one of Mr. McDowell's pupils?

In answer to my objection, that the drawings furnished by Maria Monk do not, so far as I or any one else has yet been able to discover, correspond with the internal fixtures and localities, it has been said, and will be said again, and again, that great alterations have been made in the nunnery--that masons and carpenters and painters, have been at work these nine months, and that the newly escaped nun--(Frances Patridge) declares that so many alterations have been made during that period, that she should scarcely recognize it herself. To this I answer, most emphatically, IT IS NOT TRUE. There have been no such alterations, either in the building within, or the vaults beneath, or the walls without. All things remain as they were. Let it here be borne in mind *"that whatever alterations may be attempted, there are changes which no mason or carpenter can make and effectually conceal."* Impressed with this truth, and it is almost the only one I have been able to discover in the book, I went prepared upon this point.

I thought it not unlikely that I might be mystified by paint and whitewash. But it was not so. There is not an outward wall, nor a cellar, nor a vault, that has been whitewashed. The mason-work is all, everywhere, of stone-work, ancient and massive. The mortar, moreover, has become everywhere so indurated in the lapse of time, as to

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be as impenetrable as the stone it serves to cement together. No builder could break up an old stone wall or partition, and remove it, or stop up a vault, or build up a gate-way, without leaving indubitable evidences of the new work, and the alterations. Could any builder in New-York build up the doors and windows of the Bridewell, without the use of paint or whitewash, so as to prevent detection, or so as to make the new work in all respects correspond with the old? The thing is impossible.

Again.--Maria Monk has laid down the track by which she says she escaped, and has given a narrative of the way she proceeded to get out, which, in the first place, the wall she must have climbed, prove to have been impossible, and to which the internal regulations of the house, as I believe, give a positive contradiction. By the course she has marked out on the map, she must have come to within a few feet of the broad gate, always open in the day time, leading into St. Joseph street. In the yard where she then was, there are various doors opening into several parts of the buildings. Well--having been near the broad gate, she says she wheeled round to the right, almost crossed her track in turning a wing, and finally escaped through the garden grounds into Jean Baptiste street. Now this whole tale is not only improbable, but absolutely impossible. There is no passage that way. She must have leaped a succession of walls--the outer wall some twenty feet high--walls which no unaided mortal, man or woman, could have surmounted.

When reminded of these facts by Messrs. Jones and Le Clere, gentlemen from Montreal, who had an interview with Maria at Messrs. Van Nostrand & Dwight's book store, in August, she resorted to the usual subterfuge, that there were a door and a gate there then, but intimating that they had been altered. Again I say it is not true! The walls have stood a century--there was no gate, and no passage-way has been filled up. A- well might Alderman Woodruff send a bevy of masons to build up the portals of the City Hall, and the people of New-York not know it, as that such works could have been executed in Montreal, and the people of Montreal kept in ignorance of the fact. But whence this great difficulty of escaping? There are plenty of doors and gates, and every nun has a key at her side. Their restraint is voluntary, and they can break their vow and retire if they please. Or, if their health will not bear the confinement, they can leave after the white veil, and before taking the black.

Again, as to the secret passage under ground to the Seminary. Whence its necessity, since the gate is always open, and the hospitals with communicating doors to the cloisters always accessible? If such passage had ever

existed, it must necessarily have led under the foundation of the stupendous cathedral before described. The foundations of this structure were laid broad and deep. They dug until they came to water, and had such a pathway existed, it would have been discovered then. Mr. Frothingham, and hundreds of others, passed the spot daily, and viewed the progress of the workmen continually. Yet no such passage was ever seen or heard of. And there has been no filling up. There was indeed an old passage way to the river—perhaps from the old French church in Notre Dame street, now pulled down, constructed according to tradition, for use in time of war---perhaps for the procurement of water---but that has long years ago been filled up. It was probably some reminiscence of this old affair, that gave the hint for the story of the passage to the seminary. But no such passage exists.

Again, as to the births and murders of children: in the first place, the whole tale is improbable, both as to the murder of nuns and infants. Do murderers cluster in numbers to perpetrate their butcheries, and thus purposely furnish the means of conviction? Would they be so foolish, and so mad, as to keep a written record of their murders? And would so many mothers consent to strangle their own offspring? Can a woman forget her sucking child? It is not so! The voice of indignant nature rises up to proclaim the falsehood! And moreover, as to the number of novices and infants: Miss Monk states, that on a certain occasion, she discovered a book in the Superior's custody, containing the record of the admissions of novices, and of the births of infants who were murdered. About twenty-five of these pages were written over, containing about fifteen entries on a page. "Several of these pages," she says, were occupied with the records of the births of the murdered infants. And all the records were either of admissions or births. Now, we will allow twenty pages for the records of admissions of novices, and five for the births of the murdered children. Fifteen entries on a page, twenty pages, will give us the number of **THREE HUNDRED** admissions in two years. Now there are but thirty-six nuns in all, and seldom more than four or five novices, or postulants.--Again, as to the infants--if we allow five pages to have been devoted to these records of births, we have **SEVENTY-FIVE** births during the same period!! Now, as I have already said, there are but thirty-six nuns; more than one-half are "past age." Certainly not more than 15 of them could "in the natural course of human events," become mothers. Taking Maria's statements, therefore, as correct data, and each of those 15 nuns--striking the average--must give birth to two and a half children every year!! A most prolific race, truly!! What

nonsense, and how great the popular credulity to swallow it! —But I weary in my exposure of impossibilities. Nor is it necessary to proceed further with them. I might indeed write a volume as large as her own, in the exposure of the multitudinous inconsistencies and contradictions of the "Awful Disclosures." But "the game would not be worth the candle." And besides, with the ample refutation I have given the great and essential features of her work, the minor and less important fabrications fall to the ground of course. I will therefore now close this protracted narrative, by expressing my deliberate and solemn opinion, founded not only upon my own careful examination, but upon the firmest convictions of nearly the entire population of Montreal—embracing the great body of the most intelligent evangelical Christians, **THAT MARIA MONK IS AN ARRANT IMPOSTOR, AND HER BOOK IN ALL ITS ESSENTIAL FEATURES, A TISSUE OF CALUMNIES.** However guilty the Catholics may be in other respects, or in other countries, as a man of honor and professor of the Protestant faith, I **MOST SOLEMNLY BELIEVE THAT THE PRIESTS AND NUNS ARE INNOCENT IN THIS MATTER.**

October 8, 1836.

WILLIAM L. STONE.

POSTSCRIPT.—Since the copy of the foregoing narrative was placed in the hands of the printer, at the urgent solicitation of some of the friends of Maria Monk, I have had an interview with her, together with the newly escaped nun, as she calls herself, Frances Partridge, who has arrived in season to confirm all Maria's statements, and add divers other tales of terror of her own. The result is, that, so far from giving me reason to alter a single line of what I have written, I would add to the force of my contradictions of the calumnies contained in the "Awful Disclosures," if language would allow of it; for if I before had entertained the least lingering fragment of a suspicion, that I could in any respect have been deceived, this interview would have done all away. The friends of Maria have looked upon the arrival and confirmatory statements of Miss Partridge as a god-send: but if they are ever brought to their right minds upon this subject, they will lament in bitterness of heart, that they ever had any thing to do with either. It is not necessary to go into the details of this short examination which I gave them, in presence of some half a dozen of their friends—clerical and laical. Suffice it to say, that their imposture was in ten minutes rendered as apparent as the sun at noon-day. I am now more free and bold than ever to declare, *that neither Maria Monk nor Frances Partridge has ever been within the walls of the Convent of the Hotel Dieu.* So ignorant indeed is Frances Partridge of the institution, that she located it on the wrong side of a

very large block of buildings—assigning a passage and stairway entrance into the *Hotel Dieu* from Notre Dame-street! Nor was this a mere *lapsus lingue*. I gave her time to recover: Maria—for they assisted in prompting each other—gave her a kind hint to recover herself, but she did not “take,” and three times distinctly, did she repeat the fatal mistake. In the course of various other questions, she stated that within her knowledge, a new stone wall had been erected across a particular cellar, during the late summer. The story was untrue. On being asked which of the cellars had been newly white-washed during the present season, she replied that they had all been thoroughly white-washed throughout, this season—that she had herself assisted in white-washing them—and asked Maria, if they had not formerly been engaged in that work together. To which Maria assented. *Now it is a fact that neither of the cellars of the Hotel Dieu has ever been white-washed at all!* neither the present year, nor in years past. Not a particle of white-wash has been used beneath the first story, and the walls are as bare of lime as when taken from the quarry! The examination was pursued, especially with Maria, until the proof was as clear as the light, that they were both, in all respects, lying impostors. Under these circumstances, I gave my views to the gentlemen present, and begged them to discard them at once. But as I thought they appeared to place more confidence in their word than in mine, I retired. They urged me to stay longer; but I told them it would do no good. The fact was now unquestionable that they had never been in the Convent, and remain and bandy words with them I would not. One reverend gentleman waxed angry, and said that he had as good a right to pronounce me a liar, in saying that I had been in the nunnery, as I had to pronounce those women liars. Of course I took my leave—pained that men of sense should show such a spirit, and allow themselves to be made such egregious dupes of, by two of the most shallow impostors that I ever saw. The apostle speaks of certain men in latter days, who, among other things, were to “make captive silly women.” The case is here reversed.—“Silly women” are “making captive” men of sense. How melancholy to see grave theologians, and intelligent laymen, thus pinning themselves to the aprons of such women! But enough.

W. L. S.

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